

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-09

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 NEAE-00 SSO-00 NSCE-00 INRE-00

CIAE-00 INR-07 NSAE-00 DODE-00 IO-10 SP-02 SAM-01

PRS-01 SCCT-01 SY-05 OC-05 CCO-00 SS-15 NSC-05 /074 W

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FM AMEMBASSY BEIRUT

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 3887

INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN IMMEDIATE

AMEMBASSY ANKARA IMMEDIATE

AMEMBASSY ATHENS IMMEDIATE

AMEMBASSY CAIRO IMMEDIATE

AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS IMMEDIATE

AMEMBASSY LONDON IMMEDIATE

AMEMBASSY PARIS IMMEDIATE

AMEMBASSY ROME IMMEDIATE

AMEMBASSY TEHRAN IMMEDIATE

AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV IMMEDIATE

USCINCEUR VAIHINGEN GER IMMEDIATE

S E C R E T SECTION 1 OF 2 BEIRUT 4830

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINS, LE, PLO

SUBJECT: LEBANESE CRISIS

REF: BEIRUT 4794

SUMMARY: MODERATE CHRISTIANS DEEPLY CONCERNED RE ESCALATION
CURRENT FIGHTING IN BEIRUT AND CURRENTLY BEWILDERED AS TO HOW
A SOLUTION CAN BE REACHED. THEY ARE THE FIRST TO RECOGNIZE
THAT LEBANON CURRENTLY LEADERLESS AND ARE SEEKING A LEBANESE
MUSLIM WITH WHOM THEY CAN DEAL, HOPEFULLY TO PATCH TOGETHER
SOME SORT OF COMPROMISE TEAM THAT CAN RULE THE COUNTRY UNTIL
THERE IS A NEW PRESIDENT, AUGUST 1976. END SUMMARY.

1. THIS MORNING DCM AND I WENT TO AMERICAN INIVERSITY HOSPITAL

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TO DELIVER PRESIDENT FORD'S MESSAGE (STATE 084399 NOTAL) TO

FRANGIE'S STAFF THERE. WE WERE USHERED INTO LARGE RECEPTION ROOM WHERE VARIOUS LEBANESE DIGNITARIES WERE PAYING THEIR RESPECTS. AMONG THOSE RECEIVING WAS FOREIGN MINISTER TAQLA. TAQLA TOOK ME ASIDE AND ASKED IF I HAD ANY VIEWS ON THE CURRENT CRISIS. TOLD HIM THAT WE AND OTHER FRIENDS OF LEBANON CONSIDERED IT EXTREMELY GRAVE FOR IN ALL HONESTLY WE DID NOT SEE THAT THE TODAY HAD A GOVERNMENT. TAQLA ENERGETICALLY AGREED, POINTING OUT THAT ONE MUST BE REALISTIC AT SUCH SERIOUS MOMENTS. TAQLA CONFIRMED WHAT WE HAD HEARD LAST NIGHT, THAT YESTERDAY AFTER-NOON'S CABINET MEETING WAS A DONNYBROOK, WITH PRIME MINISTER EXERCISING NO REPEAT NO CONTROL AND MINISTERS SHOUTING AT EACH OTHER. TAQLA DID NOT ATTEND BUT SAID HE OF COURSE HAD BEEN FULLY INFORMED. IN RESPONSE TO TAQLA'S QUESTION, I SAID THAT, LIKE MOST OTHER WESTERN EMBASSIES HERE WE HAD LITTLE OR NO INFORMATION AND THAT I HOPED HE WOULD FILL ME IN ON THE CURRENT SCENE. PROBLEM, AS HE PUT IT, WAS THAT WE WERE FACED WITH ESCALATING VIOLENCE BETWEEN CHRISTIAN RIGHTISTS AND FEDAYEEN RADICALS AND LEBANESE RADICALS WHO WERE BEING SUPPORTED MORE AND MORE BY LESS RADICAL PALESTINIAN ELEMENTS BUT THEY WERE BRINGING ALONG WITH THEM RADICAL LEBANESE MUSLIMS. CHRISTIANS SAW THEIR VERY EXISTENCE IN LEBANON THREATENED AND MORE AND MORE CHRISTIANS WERE INCLINED TO SIDE WITH ULTRA-RIGHTISTS WHOM IN THE PAST THEY HAD NEVER SUPPORTED. I ASKED TAQLA AS TO THE ROLE OF VARIOUS MUSLIM LEADERS AND HE STATED HE CONSIDERED FORMER PRIME MINISTER SAEB SALAAM CURRENTLY AMONG THE MOST IMMODERATE. SAEB IS ACTING NOT ONLY AS AN ULTRA MUSLIM BUT ALSO A "DIRTY" LEBANESE POLITICIAN WHO IS OUT FOR EVERYTHING HE CAN PERSONALLY GAIN AT THE EXPENSE OF HIS COUNTRY. THE SHI'A LEADER IMAM MUSA AL-SADR, WITH WHOM TAQLA HAS BEEN IN CONTACT SHARES TAQLA'S DEEP CONCERN. HOWEVER, BEING MUSLIM HE IS PERSONALLY ON THE SIDELINES AND IS COUNSELING HIS FORCES TO REMAIN COMPLETELY ALOOF FROM THE VIOLENCE. THE IMAM, HOWEVER, IS NOT PLAYING AN ACTIVE ROLE AS OF THIS MOMENT.

2. FORMER PRIME MINISTER RACHID KARAME FROM TRIPOLI IS, ACCORDING TO TAQLA, THE BEST HOPE FOR MODERATION ON THE MUSLIM SIDE. UNFORTUNATELY, TRIPOLI IS EXTREMELY TENSE AND KARAME HAS BEEN DEVOTING MOST OF HIS EFFORTS TO BRINGING BACK SOME RULE AND REASON TO HIS POLITICAL FIEFDOM.

3. TAQLA ASKED IF I HAD HEARD ANYTHING FROM WASHINGTON. I
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POINTED OUT THAT WE HAD MERELY BEEN REPORTING EVENTS UP TO NOW AND AS OF THE MOMENT I DID NOT SEE ANYTHING THAT EITHER THIS EMBASSY OR MY GOVERNMENT COULD DO TO ASSIST. TAQLA CONCURRED BUT SPECIFICALLY REQUESTED THAT I EXPRESS TO THE DEPARTMENT HIS DEEP CONCERN THAT THE SITUATION THROUGHOUT THE LEBANON WOULD DETERIORATE TO SUCH AN EXTENT THAT THE ISRAELIS MIGHT BE TEMPTED TO ACT IN SOUTHERN LEBANON. THIS WOULD, OF COURSE, RESULT IN SYRIAN ACTIONS AND COULD BRING ABOUT A RESUMPTION OF AREA

HOSTILITIES. RATHER NAIVELY TAQLA REQUESTED THAT WE INCREASE OUR VIGILANCE IN THIS DOMAIN AND INFORM HIS IMMEDIATELY IF WE HAD ANY INDICATIONS OF ISRAELI ACTIONS. RE SYRIA, I ASKED TAQLA IF THE RUMOR I HAD HEARD YESTERDAY REGARDING A SYRIAN EMMISSARY WAS ACCURATE. HE SAID THAT A SYRIAN OFFICIAL HAD COME HERE BUT ON OTHER BUSINESS NOT RELATED TO THE CURRENT CRISIS. HE HAS, HOWEVER, SENT A "RESPONSIBLE INDIVIDUAL" TO SEE PRESIDENT ASAD AND TO SEEK SYRIAN HELP IN ABATING PALESTINIAN-LEBANESE PROGRESSIVES' DEMANDS. I INQUIRED WHETHER THE SECRETARY GENERAL GENERAL OF THE ARAB LEAGUE RIYAD, WHO ARRIVED HERE LAST NIGHT MIGHT BE OF HELP. TAQLA SAID HE HAD SEEN HIM LAST EVENING, HAD FILLED HIM IN ON THE SITUATION AS HE SAW IT AND THAT RIYAD WOULD DO HIS BEST. TAQLA ADDED, HOWEVER, THAT HE DID NOT SEE MUCH THAT RIYAD COULD DO OTHER THAN POSSIBLY BESPEAK MODERATION IN THE MUSLIM LEADERSHIP MEETING THAT WOULD BE TAKING PLACE THIS AFTERNOON AT 1700 LOCAL UNDER THE PRESIDENCY OF SAEB SALAAM. WE HAVE HEARD ELSEWHERE THAT THIS MEETING WILL INCLUDE NOT ONLY LEBANESE MUSLIMS OF ALL VARIETIES BUT ALSO PALESTINIANS.

4. UPON LEAVING HOSPITAL, DCM AND I PROCEEDED TO RESIDENCE OF MARONITE POLITICIAN MICHEL KHOURY, SON OF THE FIRST PRESIDENT AND INTIMATE CONFIDANT OF FORMER PRESIDENT CHARLES HELOU. HE IS ALSO CLOSE TO RACHID KARAME. KHOURY'S HOME WAS TARGET OF BOMB ATTACK LAST EVENING AND OUR CALL OSTENSIBLY WAS TO CONGRATULATE HIM ON THE BOMB'S RELATIVE IMPOTENCE.

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5. KHOURY, WHO WE SAW ALONE, IS AS DEEPLY CONCERNED AND TOOK SAME GENERAL APPROACH AS TAQLA RE ESCALATION. YESTERDAY HE HAD SEEN GEMAYEL, JUMBLATT, FORMER PRESIDENT CHAMOUN, AND HAD BEEN IN TOUCH WITH SAEB SALAAM. HE CONCURRED RE LATTER'S CURRENT POSITION AND GEMAYEL'S PRESENT INTRANSIGENCE. WE ASKED HIM WHAT "DEMANDS" WERE BEING MADE OF GEMAYEL. KHOURY SAID THAT GEMAYEL WAS BEING ASKED TO TURN OVER TO UNSPECIFIED AUTHORITIES THOSE RESPONSIBLE FOR THE "MASSACRE" IN THE BUS. THIS, KHOURY ADMITTED, WAS IMPOSSIBLE AND HAD BEEN REJECTED CATEGORICALLY BY THE PHALANGE LEADER. KHOURY IS CURRENTLY ENDEAVORING TO FIND SOME FACE-SAVING DEVICE SUCH AS AGREEING TO INVESTIGATE THE SHOOT-UP OF THE BUS AND HAVE THOSE RESPONSIBLE TURNED OVER TO THE LEBANESE GOVERNMENT. THIS MIGHT BE ACCEPTED, HE BELIEVES, BY PALESTINIAN-LEBANESE PROGRESSIVES, BUT HE STATES THE LATTER SEE THE POSSIBILITY OF TOTALLY CRUSHING THE PHALANGE AND THEREFORE ARE MOST INTRAN-SECRET

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SIGENT. PROBLEM IS FURTHER COMPLICATED BY THE FACT THAT ARAFAT IS REMAINING ALOOF FROM PRESENT NEGOTIATIONS AND ABU IYAD (NUMBER 2 OF FATAH AND LEADER OF THE BLACK SEPTEMBER ORGANIZATION) IS THEIR SPOKESMAN. KHOURY IS TRYING TO HAVE A CHRISTIAN LEADER SUCH AS FORMER PRESIDENT HELOU COME OUT WITH A STRONG STATEMENT CONDEMNING GEMAYEL BUT EVEN MORE STRONGLY CONDEMNING THE FEDAYEEN AND THEN BESPEAKING NATIONAL UNITY. HE WOULD HOPE THAT HE COULD THEN CONVINCE RACHID KARAME TO SUBSCRIBE TO SUCH A STATEMENT AND THUS BE A RALLYING POINT FOR MODERATE MUSLIMS WHO ARE THE MAJORITY OF LEBANESE OF THAT FAITH. KHOURY WAS ON HIS WAY TO SEE KARAME WHEN WE LEFT AND WILL BE IN TOUCH WITH US THIS EVENING. ON OF THE COMPLICATING FACTORS, HOWEVER, IS THAT CHARLES HELOU IS NOT REPEAT NOT CURRENTLY IN VERY GOOD PHYSICAL SHAPE AND MAY BE RELUCTANT TO ACT ON KHOURY'S RECOMMENDATIONS.

6. WE ASKED KHOURY WHAT CHAMOUN WAS UP TO. HE SAID NOTHING AS OF THE MOMENT. RE REPORTS THAT CHAMOUN'S FORCES WERE BRINGING IN MORTARS AND HEAVY MACHINE GUNS TO BEIRUT AREA, HE SAID THIS WOULD NOT SURPRISE HIM BECAUSE CERTAINLY CHAMOUN'S MEN WERE SYMPATHETIC TO THEIR PHALANGE COUNTERPARTS. HE INQUIRED RHETORICALLY, HOWEVER, WHAT BOTH CHAMOUNISTS AND PHALANGISTS COULD DO AGAINST THE FEDAYEEN SUPPORTED BY LEBANESE MUSLIMS.

7. AS OF THE MOMENT, SITUATION DOESN'T LOOK TOO BRIGHT. THE ONLY ENCOURAGING FEATURE WE CAN CITE IS THAT TAQLA AND KHOURY, WHO ARE CLOSE PERSONAL FRIENDS, SEEM TO BE ON THE SAME TRACK AND BETWEEN THEM MIGHT BE ABLE TO FIND THE CURRENTLY MISSING GIMMICK.

8. FINAL POINT -- PRESIDENT FRANGIE'S RECOVERY IS MOVING ALONG WELL BUT HE STILL IS IN CONVALESCENCE.
GODLEY

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